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AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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NOFORN

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDING NOFORN CAPTION)

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (JHUNTER/ESPRUILL)  
BRUSSELS FOR DOJ/DEA (TSCARANTINO)  
DEA/OS/OSE/CNTOC (WBROWN)  
E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/16/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [SL](#)  
SUBJECT: PROPOSED PRESS STATEMENTS ON KOROMA'S STRONG  
ANTI-NARCOTICS COOPERATION

REF: A. 08 FREETOWN 336

[B](#). FREETOWN 78

[C](#). FREETOWN 99

[D](#). FREETOWN 142

Classified By: Ambassador June Carter Perry for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#). (SBU) The following paragraphs provide further background information (paras. 2-5) on the Ambassador's meeting with President Koroma on April 15, and proposed press statements for the White House (para. 6) and Department (para. 7), per reftel D. Please note that the draft press statements must be classified as SECRET/NO FOREIGN until after the expulsions take place, likely on April 20. Embassy will inform Department when the expulsion order has been executed, at which point the statements' embargo can be lifted for public release.

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BACKGROUND  
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[2](#). (S/NF) Ambassador met with President Ernest Bai Koroma at his request on April 15 to discuss the expulsions of three individuals into U.S. custody. As the meeting began, Ambassador thanked Koroma for his recent strong displays of leadership, including a visit on April 11 to SLPP Headquarters to survey the damage incurred during political clashes in March (reftel C), and to offer his personal assistance in repairing the damage. This, the Ambassador said, showed the President's commitment to unity across party lines to ensure stability and opportunities for further national development. The President informed Ambassador that he had given a radio address to the nation on April 14, and intends to give more. This is in accordance with a suggestion made by Ambassador to the President and the Foreign Minister shortly after arriving in-country, that the President should regularly communicate with his constituents. As in most West African countries, radio is the best medium in Sierra Leone to do that.

[3](#). (S/NF) Following this preamble discussion, Koroma informed Ambassador that his government is ready to keep the promise he made February 27 to expel two indicted narcotraffickers and one material witness into U.S. custody (reftel B). Koroma will be attending the APC party conference in Makeni from April 16 through April 19, and wished to inform Ambassador immediately that the High Court will reconvene on April 20 to relay its verdict against these individuals and others currently facing charges related to the July 13 cocaine bust (reftel A). Following the reading of the judgment and (in all likelihood) sentences, the three individuals will be expelled from Sierra Leone and ready for removal to the United States. The President asked that the Ambassador immediately inform Washington, including the State Department and DEA, of his intentions, and to be prepared to remove the individuals as quickly as possible on or around April 20.

14. (S/NF) Ambassador thanked the President for his commitment and action on the expulsions, and applauded his leadership to address drug trafficking in his country. They discussed the growing scourge of narcotics in West Africa, and the need to combat these sophisticated criminal rings with policy, legislation, and effective enforcement. Political will from the highest office, the Presidency, demonstrates the Government of Sierra Leone's intention to protect their country from the rabid and rapacious exploitation of traffickers. Koroma agreed with Ambassador that he and his government must remain vigilant. He thanked her for recognizing his leadership on this issue, and said that he will welcome statements of support from Washington to reinforce the message that Sierra Leone has taken a strong, globally-recognized stand against drugs.

15. (S/NF) Koroma's Special Assistant will be working closely with embassies to coordinate the expulsion operation on April 20, and DEA agents are expected to arrive in-country on April 17 to finalize the operational effort.

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PROPOSED STATEMENT: WHITE HOUSE/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
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16. (S/NF until 04/20/2009, pending post confirmation) We are pleased to announce that today the Government of Sierra Leone expelled narcotics traffickers indicted by the Southern District of New York. These criminals are on their way back to the United States now to face justice for their roles in the corrosive global narcotics trade. As we work with our allies in the Western Hemisphere to eliminate the flow of drugs in and out of Central and South America, we have been forced to recognize that this criminal activity has spread to another part of the world - West Africa, a fragile region that has been severely impacted by coups and civil wars, devastating political, economic, and social infrastructure. We have seen countries in this region, such as Guinea-Bissau, fall prey to sophisticated and opportunistic criminal organizations. Narcotics trafficking throughout the region is increasing, and without strong political will to combat the scourge, there is every possibility that West Africa will be unable to stem this dangerous tide. Sierra Leone, however, is one shining example of a country that has refused to surrender to the criminality that threatens to engulf it. By expelling these individuals, as well as passing a stringent national Narcotics Control Act and prosecuting domestic and foreign drug smugglers, President Koroma, his government, and his people are sending a strong message that narcotics trafficking will not be tolerated in Sierra Leone. We value the example that Sierra Leone is setting for the rest of the world - even the country at the bottom of the Human Development index, only a few short years out of a brutal, decade-long civil war, will take any steps necessary in the global war against drugs. We thank President Koroma for his strong leadership on this issue, his cooperation with our government, and his efforts to bring greater peace and security to the country of Sierra Leone. We also applaud the interagency collaboration between the Departments of State and Justice that brought the expulsion to fruition, and the joint commitment from all U.S. Government agencies to combat the narcotics trade.

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PROPOSED STATEMENT: DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
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17. (S/NF until 04/20/2009, pending post confirmation) The Department offers its thanks today to President Ernest Bai Koroma and the Government of Sierra Leone for expelling wanted narcotics traffickers into U.S. custody. President Koroma and the Sierra Leonean people have been setting a positive example, in both West Africa and across the African continent, for their commitment to democracy, human rights, and rule of law. The United States Government has worked closely with Sierra Leone on a number of development issues, and now welcomes our collaboration on one of the biggest

security threats to West Africa at this time: narcotics trafficking. The expulsion of these individuals represents a significant step towards effectively curbing the transit of illegal drugs through West Africa, and stands as a statement that transnational crime organizations will not be tolerated in Sierra Leone. President Koroma and his country are working tirelessly to identify and prosecute such criminal elements within their own country, and have clearly demonstrated their willingness to partner with the United States in the global war against drugs, by removing these wanted criminals. We welcome this partnership, and continue to value the already robust relationship that the United States and Sierra Leone has shared for many years. The Department also extends its gratitude to the Department of Justice, particularly the Drug Enforcement Administration, for their collaboration and support in fighting the narcotics trade in West Africa.

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COMMENT  
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18. (S/NF) This is a prescient time to recognize the value of our bilateral relationship with Sierra Leone. Though a small country still grappling with the long-term impacts of its civil war, their notable commitment to democracy (as demonstrated by two rounds of peaceful and fair elections), human rights (Koroma was one of the only African leaders to publicly denounce human rights violations by President Mugabe of Zimbabwe), and diplomacy (Sierra Leone was one of a handful of African countries to immediately recognize Kosovo's independence, and the only African country to submit a supporting brief to the International Court of Justice) should be applauded. President Koroma is sometimes accused of being a "sphinx without a secret," as a UK diplomat once phrased it - he is slow to take needed actions, and though his handlers suggest that this represents thoughtful decision-making, some believe that he is simply afraid to act and afraid to fully wear the mantle of his position. This expulsion, the progress being made towards a signed Status of Forces Agreement, and re-energized engagement towards becoming a Millennium Challenge country show promise for our bilateral relationship, but also for his maturation as President. This is further evidenced by his increased radio outreach to the public, initiation of a "peace process" with the opposition party, and his plan to establish an independent Commission of Inquiry into the political clashes in March. Koroma may be slow to act, but when he does, his actions are nearly always on-target to meet the needs of his people. Statements from the USG on the expulsions will bolster Koroma's confidence as a national and sub-regional leader, and likely encourage him to take swifter action in future on issues of import. End Comment.

PERRY